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Vera's Vacation

A Drama in Three Acts

By Louise Rand Bascom

Author of "The Masonic Ring," "The Golden Goblet," etc.

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no 1.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

JOSIAH BLAKE, an irascible farmer, who takes paying guests in the summer time.

ELVIRA BLAKE, his patient wife.

ALICE BLAKE, his college daughter.

TOBY BLAKE, his overworked son.

VERA VERRINGTON, a college chum of Alice.

ALONZO BUNDY, a specialist on Lepidoptera.

ELISE BUNDY, his giggling wife.

ROY THROCKMORTON, M. D., a young fisherman.

ANNA THROCKMORTON, his mother.

FARM-HANDS, NEIGHBORS, ETC.

SYNOPSIS

Act I.—Josiah Blake's Kitchen.

Act II.—Josiah Blake's Sitting Room.

Act III.—Feed Room in Josiah Blake's Stable.

Place.—A Country Farmhouse.

Time.—Present.

COSTUMES

Blake wears an old pair of homespun or denim trousers, a patched coat and a stiff-bosomed shirt, minus collar and tie. He has a square red or gray beard and is partly bald.

Mrs. Blake is plainly and neatly dressed—a wholesome little woman with a half-worried look.

Alice dresses in shirt waist suits. She, too, has a worried expression.

Toby wears overalls, has his shirt sleeves rolled up above his elbows, and a bandana handkerchief about his neck.

Vera wears handsome clothes. She is rather dignified and grave, contrasting with Alice, who is nervous and quick in her speech and movements.

Bundy is a slim, spectacled, stoop-shouldered individual. His tie is awry and his face has the blank expression which indicates absent-mindedness and concentration.

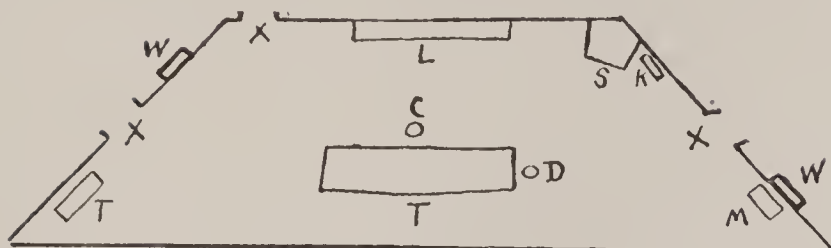
Mrs. Bundy dresses in fluffy up-to-date gowns.

Roy is a young “swell.”

Mrs. Throckmorton wears a white lace cap and dresses in black. She has the manner of one with an important announcement to make.

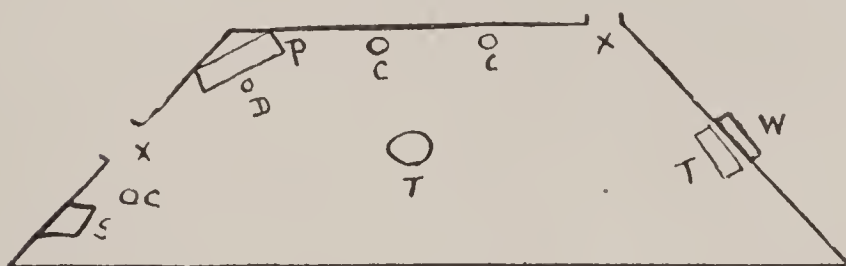
STAGE DIAGRAMS

ACT I



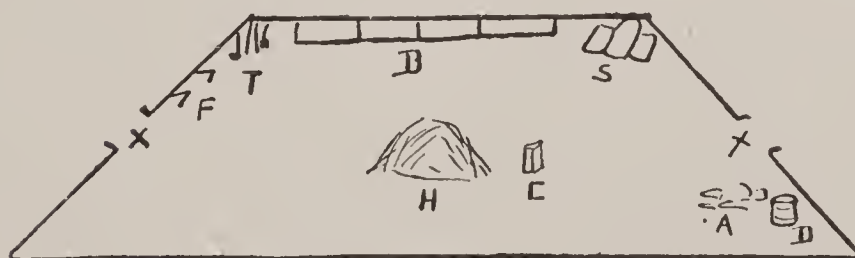
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|----|------------|----|-------------|----|----------|
| X. | Door. | T. | Table. | C. | Chair. |
| W. | Window. | S. | Stove. | D. | Stool. |
| M. | Milk Safe. | L. | Lamp Shelf. | K. | Woodbox. |

ACT II



- | | | | | | |
|----|---------|----|--------|----|--------|
| X. | Door. | T. | Table. | P. | Piano. |
| W. | Window. | S. | Stove. | D. | Stool. |
| | | C. | Chair. | | |

ACT III



- | | | | | | |
|----|---------|----|---------------------|----|--------------|
| X. | Door. | T. | Shovels, Hoes, etc. | C. | Box. |
| B. | Bins. | F. | Hooks with Harness | A. | Gunny Sacks. |
| D. | Barrel. | S. | Sacks of Feed. | H. | Pile of Hay. |

Vera's Vacation

ACT I.

SCENE.—*Kitchen in Josiah Blake's farmhouse. The room is bare and unprepossessing, with pots and pans hanging from the walls. Under the roller towel down R. stands a small table, bearing soap, a tin basin, and a bucket of water. A shelf of lamps decorates the rear wall, and beneath the shelf are two barrels. There is a stove across the corner up L. with a woodbox nearby. Windows are found up R. and down L. with a screened milk safe under the latter; doors R. C., R. Back and L. C. A long kitchen table stands down C. with a high stool L. and a chair back of it, in which Alice is discovered sitting, her face buried in her arms. A pan of partly peeled potatoes sets near her.*

(Enter Toby R. C. with an armful of wood. He sees Alice's position and tiptoes around her listening. Finally he bends over her cautiously, but, being apparently unsatisfied, he backs off and says, "P-st." Observing that this is without effect, he throws down the wood. Alice starts up, nervously. Seeing Toby, she yawns, rubs her eyes, and hurriedly tucks into her dress a scrap of paper and pencil.)

Toby. Oh, hecky! I thought you was cryin' an' here ye air a snoozin' when you'd ought to be gittin' supper. (Picks up a half-peeled potato.) Pa'll give you fits fur parin' it that way. You ain't left much but the eye.

Alice (resuming peeling). Father won't know.

Toby. Thar ain't much happens on this here farm that pa don't know—just put that in your manger!

Alice (shivering). Don't, Toby. You make me feel uncomfortable. Where's mother?

Toby. Cleanin' up after some of the parlor hogs, I reckon. (Picks up wood.)

Alice. Parlor hogs? Is that a new breed?

Toby (laughing uproariously as he carries the wood to the box). Ha! ha! They teach you a lot at college, don't they? Ha! ha! That's my name for the boarders. Most of 'em ain't as decent as our Berkshires. Say, what *was* you cryin' about?

Alice. I wasn't crying. I was doing some figuring and it put me to sleep, that's all. I didn't rest well last night.

Toby. Shouldn't think you would've. The way you cleaned and pranced about the house all day you'd think you was expectin' a feller or somethin'. (Looks about furtively.) Got any cookies?

Alice. Yes, but I'm saving them.

Toby. Saving them? *You!* Didn't know you was gittin' the stingy sickness, too. Go on now and git me one 'fore somebody comes.

Mrs. Blake (entering L. C. with an ash tray, the contents of which she empties in the stove). Toby, do you mean to say you've only carried in one armload of wood since dinner? Pa'll be right wrathful with you! Mr. Bundy's comin'

back from town on the 5:03, and you was to take the Dayton and go to the station for him.

Toby (approaching door R. C.). Oh, hecky! This place is just nothin' but work, work, work! Wouldn't keer ef you got somethin' fur it, but you don't. Pa's nothin' but an old skinflint, that's what he is! (Makes noisy exit.)

Mrs. Blake (looking after him, reproachfully). Why, Toby!

Alice (rising). Mother, it's true. He's just ruining the lives of us all.

Mrs. Blake. You oughtn't to say that, daughter. He let you go to college.

Alice (bitterly). With the money grandmother left me! It nearly killed him, too! (Ready to sob.) It puts us in an awful position to have him so ungenerous, so—so—

Mrs. Blake (quickly). Well, it can't be helped. Your father's dictated all his life and it ain't for us to rise against him now. Better finish those potatoes before he comes in. (Goes down R. and fills kettle with water.)

Alice (aside). How can I tell her? (Resuming seat.) Mother! (Pause.) Mother!

Mrs. Blake. What is it?

Alice. I—I've invited a college friend here for this month!

Mrs. Blake (aghast). What!

Alice (with feigned calm). It's Vera, the girl I owe so much to. I had to repay her kindnesses in some way, and when I found she wanted to

go to the country this summer, I asked her here for six weeks.

Mrs. Blake (in agitation). But your father will never take her in. He wouldn't let one of his own relations room here unless he was paid for it. You know his rules as well as I do.

Alice. I'm not asking him to take her for nothing. I made a hundred dollars on the college magazine last year, and I intend to pay her board.

Mrs. Blake. Pa'll think he ought to have the hundred anyhow 'thout feedin' anybody fur it.

Alice. He's not going to know. I've faked a letter to him from Vera saying she wants a room and meals. Then I'm planning to give him money in an envelope from her every week so he'll believe she's a boarder. She'll think she's a guest, and my honor will be saved without any row with father.

Mrs. Blake (gasping). Why—I—I never heard of such a thing. Suppose—suppose he finds out! He usually does find out things, daughter, and he can't tolerate deception.

Mrs. Throckmorton (entering with a serious face that betokens trouble). Mrs. Blake, could I speak with you a moment, please? (Draws Mrs. Blake down L.)

Mrs. Blake (anxiously wiping her hands on her apron). Why, of course. Any time you want to, Mrs. Throckmorton.

Mrs. Throckmorton (confidentially). Did you take the ash tray off the parlor table?

Mrs. Blake. Yes, I was just goin' to clean it. Somebody a wantin' it already?

Mrs. Throckmorton. Only me. I wanted to get a few of the ashes to clean my teeth, you know. They say there isn't anything like cigar ashes for that, and Roy doesn't smoke.

Mrs. Blake. I'm real sorry, but I've thrown the last one of 'em in the stove. I'll try to save 'em for you next time, though. You sure stove ashes won't do?

Mrs. Throckmorton. I'm afraid not. The woman's page in the *Times* didn't say anything about those, and I don't believe in folks experimentin' on their own hook. Something's sure to come of it. (Backs up stage, then halts.) By the way, do you suppose I could have a glass of milk? I find I'm very hungry.

Mrs. Blake (hastily looking at the door). Why—er—I suppose so. (More cordially.) Yes, of course, you can. (Goes to milk safe and pours out a glass of milk.) I love to see folks hungry. Want me to take this to your room for you?

Mrs. Throckmorton. No, thank you, I'll just drink it here. (Begins sipping it.) My, but you certainly do have delicious milk and butter and eggs. Roy's getting downright fat on— (Stops in consternation as Blake enters R. C.)

Blake. Air ye a drinkin' milk reg'lar now, Mrs. Throckmorton?

Mrs. Throckmorton. No; oh, no.

Blake. Wal, I jest thought ef you was a git-tin' it every atternoon we'd hev to raise the price of your board some. Ye see every drop you drink takes that much from the chickens and the hogs, an' I hev to pay out cold cash to git 'em somethin' in place of it.

Mrs. Throckmorton. Really, this is the first glass I've had, Mr. Blake. (Sets down glass, scarcely touched.)

Blake. Wal, ye kin hev the milk ef ye want it. I jest thought I'd tell ye, though, so there wouldn't be no kick when ye come to settle up. I'll make a price of five cents a glass when you take atternoon milk by the week. When ye drink it onct in awhile like this, it'll be ten cents, I guess.

Mrs. Throckmorton (confusedly, as she hastens to door L. C.). Yes, very well. Thank you. I—I'll speak to my son about it. (Exit.)

Blake (coming down R. to wash basin and washing his hands). I believe we're a goin' to take in some money this summer. Looks like the house's a goin' ter be full.

Mrs. Blake (timidly). Is there some more folks comin'?

Blake. I don't know whether they're comin' or not. I've jest got a letter from somebody named Vera Verrington, but I don't know as I'll take her in.

Alice (anxiously). Why not, father? We've got three unoccupied rooms.

Blake. Wal, I'm afraid of a woman with a name like that. She's probably one o' these here play-actresses that'll ruin the reputation of my house.

Alice. But her money is as good as anybody else's, isn't it?

Blake (crossing to large table and taking a letter from his pocket). Wal, I reckon so. Seems she's comin' in this atternoon. Must want to git here mighty bad not to wait fur an answer. I don't like bold folks like that. Says (reads): "Dear Mr. Blake: Having heard of you favorably from Mrs. Perkins"—never could abide that woman—"who was with you a number of years ago, I write to engage a room for six weeks. The best you have at about \$15.00 per week will be satisfactory. Will reach Cloverfield the afternoon of the 15th. Very truly yours, Vera Verrington."

Alice (in feigned surprise). Oh, this afternoon! I'd better go get a room ready for her. (Starts up stage to door R. Back.)

Blake. I guess maybe it'd be as well. Fix up the gable room.

Alice (turning in amazement). The gable room! Why, that's only ten dollars a week! She asks for a fifteen-dollar room.

Blake. Wal, I guess she won't know the difference. Ef she's so sot on comin' she kin take what I want to give her, I guess. Mebbe I kin git fifteen dollars from somebody else fur that there second floor room.

Alice. But I—I've got the second floor room already fixed, and—and—

Blake. You have? Wal, hereatter you leave the rooms alone till I tell you about 'em. Take the sheets an' things from the second floor room an' put 'em in the gable room. There's no use of you a mussin' things up 'thout no reason.

(*Alice* turns, brushes away the tears, and makes exit.)

Blake. That gal's plumb demented sence she went to college, seems like. I knowed no good'd come of throwin' away money that away. Perhaps ef we kin keep her down to good hard work this summer, we kin cure her o' some of her foolishness. (Sits down in chair and rocks back and forth on the legs.)

Mrs. Blake. I—I wouldn't be too harsh with her, pa. She's been studyin' hard, you know, and ought to have some recreation.

Blake (sniffing). Recreation! Re-cre-atin' is what she needs. Don't seem like a daughter of mine at all.

Mrs. Bundy (entering L. C. with a hot-water bag). I just come down to get some—(Sees *Blake*, hastily conceals bag behind her, giggling foolishly.) Tee-hee, you're in early, aren't you, Mr. *Blake*?

Blake (tartly). No, I reckon not! What was it my comin' interrupted you doin'?

Mrs. Bundy. Oh, nothing, tee-hee! I just wanted to find out what the thermometer had

registered to-day. Bundy will want to know when he comes home. Tee-hee!

Blake. The thermometer's out on the oak. You kin look at it ef you want to, but I've got somethin' else to do besides keepin' track of thermometers fur folks.

Mrs. Bundy. Tee-hee, I just thought—tee-hee—that you might have looked, tee-hee!

Blake. No, I ain't. Now about these here trips o' yourn down to the kitchen. You folks take up so much of my wife's time that I'll hev to be a gittin' her a hired gal ef it keeps up, an' o' course I'll hev to raise your rates to pay fur that. I'm jest warnin' ye, y' understand, so there won't be any kick comin'. You asked fur room an' board—never said nothin' about service an' extra milk an' water. I've guv ye what ye asked fur, but I reckon you kin see that I can't give ye gold plates an' cut chiny fur twelve-fifty a week. You'll see my pint, I guess, ef you stop to think about it.

Mrs. Bundy. Tee-hee-tee-hee! (Backs out L. C. in a gale of giggling.)

Blake. Durned ef she don't sound like them gable wrens. What in Job's name is she a titterin' about anyhow! Jest hand me a drink, will ye, Elviry?

Alice (entering with a pitcher). Is there any hot water? It's nearly time for the train, and I thought I'd better carry a little up to Ver—Miss Verrington's room.

Blake. You'll do nothin' of the kind. Ef ye start out that away with her, she'll be expectin' things all the time, an' I'm a tryin' to break 'em of that. They don't git nothin' extry 'nless they pay fur it, so don't you go around waitin' on 'em ef they ain't made some arrangemint with me. (Rises.) Guess I'd better go see that Toby gits off. The lump's gittin' so infernally stupid I can't seem to trust him a-tall.

Toby (entering R. C.). George wants to know ef he kin take the little wrench home with him to-night. Says he wants to fix the buggy so his wife kin drive to town to-morry.

Blake. George who?

Toby. Why, haymaker George, of course. Did you think it was George Washington?

Blake. Don't give me none o' your sass. Tell him I said he couldn't take the wrench nor nothin' else. His wife don't need to go to town. She'd better stay home an' look atter her work. You kin tell him, too, fur him to stop at Uncle Sim's on his way an' say to him that Aunt Marty can't stay here while he's gone. Nobody'll ever stay in my house that don't pay board; that's flat. Now what ye waitin' fur?

Toby. Will says—

Blake. He wants some of his wages. Wal, he won't git none to-night. I'll git a month's interest on that money out of the bank ef I leave it there till Saturday. Git a move on you now an' hook up the Dayton. (Exit Toby.) Wal (looks at nickeled watch), dodgastet, anyhow.

The fool's a goin' ter miss that there train, ef he don't hurry. (Starts for door R. C.) You mind me now, Alice. I won't hev no water took up to that there Verrington woman 'thout I tell ye to. (Exit.)

Alice (going to stove). I will, too, take up some water. I won't have Vera coming into the house and not have any comforts. Why, she'll think—I don't know *what* she'll think, and—

Mrs. Blake. You jest can't have her, daughter. It'll all leak out and there'll be an awful fuss. (Goes to window R. C. excitedly.) You cut across lots and meet Toby an' git him to take you to the station. When your friend gits off the train you kin tell here we've got sickness or—or somethin' an' she can't come!

Alice. What, and leave her kindnesses unreturned! It's a case of *noblesse oblige*, mother, and I can't turn her away. I can't! I can't!

Mrs. Blake (distressed). But your pa'll order her away when he finds out the truth, and he'll know the whole thing the minute she comes by the way you both act.

Alice (eagerly). No, he won't! Indeed, he won't! I wrote Vera that father couldn't stand any demonstration, and that if he saw any when she first came, he'd watch us all the time. So we're hardly going to speak at first in order to divert his suspicions, and then perhaps we can have good times together.

Mrs. Blake. I think you're perfectly crazy. You know your pa intends for you to work this

summer, and how you expect to entertain a friend and do your chores, too, is more'n I see.

Alice. But I've paid the little Frady girl to come over and prepare vegetables and things while Vera's here. She's to tell father she wants to get the experience and is doing it for nothing.

Mrs. Blake. Well, I never! You're goin' to git mixed up on all them lies. Mark my words!

Alice (filling pitcher from water on the stove). No, Providence will protect me because I'm trying to do the right thing.

Mrs. Blake. We'll see. I hope so for your sake, I'm sure, but it seems like Providence's kind o' tricky sometimes.

Mrs. Throckmorton (sticking her head in L.C.). Has he gone?

Alice. Toby?

Mrs. Throckmorton. Mr. Blake.

Alice. Yes; won't you come in?

Mrs. Throckmorton (entering). I went out in such a flurry I forgot to tell your mother what I came for. Could I speak to you a minute, Mrs. Blake?

Mrs. Blake (withdrawing her hands from a bowl of floury stuff). What can I do for you, Mrs. Throckmorton?

Mrs. Throckmorton (very confidentially). I feel that I must tell you, Mrs. Blake, that you've got the whitest towels in your house that I ever saw.

Mrs. Blake (sinking into a chair weakly). Oh!

Mrs. Throckmorton. What's the matter with you, Mrs. Blake—you look faint. (Alice sets down pitcher and rushes to her mother's side.)

Mrs. Blake (gasping). It ain't nothin', nothin' at all. I thought you was a goin' to tell me somethin' turrible, that's all. Guess I'm kind o' nervous to-day.

Roy (entering R. C. in muddy fishing costume). Jiminy-gee! But you ought to see her! (Stands holding door ajar and peeking out.) Jumping Jennies, but she's a good looker! Some class there all right! (Sound of wheels.)

Alice. Who? What? (Rushes to window R.)

Roy. The new boarder. She's coming in with old Bundy. Oh, me, oh my, I must run change my clothes. (Starts up back stairs.) No, I'll meet her this way. (Runs L. C.) Hello, mother, how are you? Put me next her for supper, Mrs. Blake, and I'll bring home ten trout to-morrow. (Exit.)

Mrs. Throckmorton (puzzled). But I always sit next him at table. What ails the boy? (Calls.) Roy! Roy! (Goes after him calling.) Roy, you didn't kiss mother! (Exit.)

Alice. It is Vera! It is, it is! Oh, what shall I do? Father's taking her upstairs—and oh, mother, Mr. Bundy's carrying her suitcase. (Hops up and down in excitement.)

Mrs. Blake. Well, ain't you goin' up to see her?

Alice. I guess I'd better wait till father leaves.

Mrs. Blake. Did you set the table?

Alice. Oh, mother, I forgot it! I'm awfully sorry.

Mrs. Blake. I'll go an' do it. You can run up the back way when your pa comes down. (Exit L. C.)

Alice (listening at door R. Back). Oh, it's too good to be true! Too good to be true! (Listening.) Now who's coming down? (Closes door quickly and starts toward the stove.)

Vera (entering R. Back). Alice!

Alice. Vera! (The girls run together and embrace.) I've dreamed about this so long, and at last it's a reality! I can hardly believe it.

Vera. Six whole weeks with you, dear! Six weeks! Think of the rides and walks we shall take in the woods! And of the sewing and talking we shall do under these grand trees! They're wonderful, dear. I never saw anything so lovely.

Alice (ecstatically). Oh, I'm so glad you like the place. You just must, *must* have a good time here.

Vera. How can I help it with all those adorable little fuzzy-wuzzy ducks and that big blue pond—and you! You never told me half enough about the beauties of Cloverfield. Are you getting supper? Let me help, do!

Alice (uncomfortably). Thank you, no, dear. I'll be up to your room in a minute. I was just going to carry some warm water to you.

Vera. Give me the water. You shan't wait on me. (Takes pitcher and starts toward door R. Back.) You sure you'll be only a minute?

Alice (putting a stick of wood in the stove). Honor bright—just a minute.

Vera. Hurry, then. I've got trunkloads to tell you. (Exit.)

Alice (with a sigh of relief). Everything is going fine. I was sure it would! (There is a crash on the back stairs.)

Vera (re-entering with a troubled face). Alice, will you ever forgive me? I've broken your pitcher!

Alice (breathlessly). Oh—oh, that's all right. You run up to your room and I'll sweep up the pieces. (Hurries to door R. Back.)

Blake (entering from door R. Back). Wal, I'll be durned! Don't seem like folks could any-more'n git inside this house till they air a livin' in the kitchen. This trip fur extra water'll cost ye one-eighty-five, miss. The bowl's well nigh useless with the pitcher broke, an' you'll hev to settle fur the whole thing. Do you want to pay fur it now or wait till the end of—

Alice (frantically). Father, father, she didn't break the pitcher! I broke it!

Tableau and Curtain.

ACT II.

SCENE.—*Parlor of Josiah Blake's farmhouse. The walls are covered with hideous oil paintings and engravings. There is a stove down R., with a rocking chair near it; a practicable window is found R. C., also an upright piano and stool across the corner R. Back, two chairs at Back, and a door L. Back. There is a marble-topped table in the center of the room with an album and other useless things upon it. Another table stands in front of the window L. C., at which Bundy is seated at rise, immersed in making notes from several large books.*

(Enter Roy, L. Back, dressed in immaculate flannels. He wanders around the room for a moment, noisily turning the leaves of the album, etc.)

Bundy (looking around reprovingly). Not fishing?

Roy. Not to-day. Ah—er—seen the new-comer this morning?

Bundy (resuming his work). Yes, indeed. I'm just writing it down. Wing expanse, three and one-half inches, short thorax, bristle-shaped antennae, spurred tibia, and—

Roy (open-mouthed). Huh!

Bundy (absorbed). Beautiful coloring!

Roy. You bet your life!

Bundy. Unexcelled grace of movement.

Roy. Divine!

Bundy. Altogether one of the finest specimens of Lepidoptera that I've ever seen. I had no idea Cloverfield could produce such a moth!

Roy (crestfallen). Oh, I was talking of Miss Verrington.

Mrs. Bundy (entering L. Back). Tee-hee, I have no doubt of it. We all are. She's a charming girl, isn't she, Bundy?

Bundy. Yes, yes, my dear.

Roy. She is indeed delightful. I—I've just been looking for her in the hopes she'd take a little walk with me. (Looks himself over.) Do you think she would?

Mrs. Bundy. Tee-hee. Do you want her so very much?

Roy. Would I give up fishing to rig myself out like a sailboat if I wasn't in earnest?

Mrs. Bundy. Tee-hee, tee-hee. We'll have to arrange it for you. Won't we, Bundy? (Stands behind Bundy's chair.)

Bundy. Certainly, my dear, certainly. (Turns in dazed way.) What is it we are going to do?

Mrs. Bundy. Tee-hee, you absent-minded old fuddle-head. We're going to give Dr. Throckmorton a chance to have a *tete-a-tete* with Miss Verrington, aren't we?

Bundy. Since you suggest it, I'm sure a *tete-a-tete* with the—er—young person would be very pleasant. Er—what time?

Mrs. Bundy. Tee-hee, you funny old thing. I'm not going to let you *tete-a-tete* with her. It's for Dr. Throckmorton we want to arrange the meeting. Tee-hee, really I'm afraid it will be difficult, Doctor. I asked her to play tennis with

me a moment ago and she said she was waiting for Miss Blake.

Roy. Waiting for Miss Blake?

Mrs. Bundy. Tee-hee. That's what she said.

Roy (starting for the door). Where was she? I'll go find her.

Mrs. Bundy. You don't need to. She's coming right in. Ah—tee-hee, there she is now.

Vera (entering R. C.). Good morning again. Has any one seen Miss Blake?

Roy. I think she's in the kitchen. She—ah—she's rarely disengaged at this time of day. Shouldn't you like to stroll down and take a look at the pond?

Vera. Thank you, but I think I'll wait for Miss Blake.

Roy. Do you mind if I wait with you?

Vera. Pray do, if you care to. (Seats herself in rocker R.)

Mrs. Bundy. Tee-hee, tee-hee, we were just going to take a little walk, too, weren't we, Bundy? (*Roy* walks about the room again, examining the pictures, etc., till the Bundys exeunt. *Vera* arranges a bunch of flowers she has brought with her.)

Bundy. Yes, yes, indeed. (Pause.)

Mrs. Bundy. Bundy?

Bundy. Eh? What?

Mrs. Bundy. Weren't we?

Bundy. Of course, my dear, of course. Er—er—(turning.) What was it we were going to do?

Mrs. Bundy. Take your books and things out under the trees. (Begins gathering up books.)

Bundy (apologetically). I'm very sorry, my dear; I had forgotten. (They go toward L. Back, and Bundy turns at the door to say absently) Er—er—hope you catch your fish.

Mrs. Bundy. Tee-hee—tee-hee. (Both exeunt.)

Roy (coming to a standstill near Vera). I suppose I ought to thank you for letting me stay with you, but I'd counted on your playing with me this morning. Please reconsider and come down to the pond; it's cooler there.

Vera. Thank you, but I can't.

Roy. Then come sit with mother in the arbor. She'd love to talk to you and I'd love to hear your answers. I know if you two got together you'd talk about fascinating things—gilliflowers and pansies and bluebirds.

Vera (smiling). Your imagination flatters me, but really I think I'd better wait for my hostess.

Roy. Your hostess!

Vera. Certainly. Miss Blake is a college friend of mine, you know.

Roy. Why—er—I—we thought you were a boarder like the rest of us. I beg your pardon, but—it still seems so impossible that—

Vera. What seems impossible?

Roy. That you aren't—er—paying for your stay. Pardon me again, but are you sure you aren't?

Vera. What *do* you mean, Dr. Throckmorton? I was invited here.

Roy (confused). Yes, but—but it's so extraordinary that you'll forgive my surprise.

Vera (ruminating). It's true Alice said her father kept a boarding house, but I did not understand the invitation as one to board. Do you suppose I've blundered? Oh, I can't have done so (rises and walks about), though, to tell the truth, Mr. Blake's behavior to me was somewhat exceptional upon my arrival.

Roy. Exactly. He never gave anybody so much as a toothpick in all his life, that man. He's a big overgrown bully, too. The minute you get within sight of Cloverfield, the brakeman and the conductor and your fellow passengers begin to tell you what sort of man Blake is and what dire things will happen to you if you don't do as he says. The result is that everybody arrives kotowing, and the old codger takes advantage of it.

Mrs. Bundy (re-entering L. Back). Tee-hee, I forgot a book. (Finds it.) Tee-hee. (*Vera* and *Roy* turn and look after her as she makes her exit.)

Vera. Really, you surprise me. His daughter is so charming that I never imagined for a moment that her father was such a curmudgeon.

Roy. His family is nice, but he is horrid to it.

Vera. Is he really nasty to his family?

Roy. Unspeakably.

Vera. Why doesn't somebody do something? That sort of man should be taken in hand.

Roy. Everybody's cowed. Besides, what's to be done?

Vera. I think I see. At any rate I'm very grateful to you for explaining things to me. I shall set to work to make use of my vacation.

Roy. How do you mean?

Vera. Clearly Mr. Blake needs training. For the sake of my friend I shall look after him a little. He has evidently had his own way too long.

Roy (admiringly). I like your nerve, but I wouldn't dare to undertake it. Nobody ever got the better of him yet.

Vera. Nobody ever tried persistently enough.

Alice (entering L. Back). Oh, there you are. I've been kept so busy that I couldn't get off before. I hope Dr. Throckmorton has entertained you.

Vera. Indeed he has. We've had quite a profitable conversation.

Blake (entering L. Back). Alice! Alice! Where in Tophet's my hat?

Alice. I don't know, father; I haven't seen it.

Blake. Git busy an' hunt fur it, then. (Alice looks about and makes her exit still hunting for it.) Somebody's allus movin' my things. (Furiously.) Gosh durn it! Gosh durn it! (Slams over a chair.) This is the dangest house!

Vera (sharply). Mr. Blake, kindly do not swear in my presence. (Roy chokes.)

Blake (staring). Wh-what?

Vera. I do not like profanity. Please refrain from it. (Turns to Roy.) As I was saying, I have never cared for Botticelli especially. I much prefer Abbe and Sargent and Pyle—the men who splash warm color here and there.

Roy. Me, too. Leynhecker and Harrison Fisher have got Millet and Whistler beat to a frazzle, I think.

Blake (noting that he can't get a word in, makes exit, mumbling). I'll be danged!

Roy. You win.

Vera. Don't congratulate me so soon. That's only the beginning.

Alice (entering L. Back). Well, here I am again. I don't know how long I shall be here, though. Something unexpected seems to happen every minute or so to take up time.

Vera. Dr. Throckmorton has just offered to take us down to the pond. Suppose we accept his proposal and accompany him; that is, unless you have something you'd rather do.

Alice. I was just going to suggest that we go down to pick some pond lilies. It's cooler there; but first I'd like to speak to you a moment by yourself, if Dr. Throckmorton doesn't mind.

Roy. Certainly not, if I'm to be included in the water-lily party. (Exit R. C.)

Alice. I have not had a chance before to apologize to you about the pitcher episode. I felt I must. It was most unfortunate, but father is forgetful at times, and—and—

Vera. Don't apologize. I quite understand, my dear. I have seen cases of your father's disease before.

Alice. Why, what do you mean? He's not sick.

Vera (drawing Alice to her confidentially). Dear, your father's a sick man.

Alice. Oh, no! No! He can't be. He's so active and—and—I must get the doctor.

Vera. Really, it is unnecessary. I am sure of it, and I have just been speaking of it to Dr. Throckmorton, who agrees with me.

Alice. Oh, Vera, you frighten me terribly! What is it?

Vera. I can't give you the name of it, but I know the treatment.

Alice. Oh, Vera, will you give it to him, or tell me how? I shall be more your debtor than ever if you'll only help me.

Vera. For your sake, I have already made up my mind to spend my vacation curing him, but you must not object to anything I may do; and promise me, dear, that you won't be angry with me.

Alice. Angry with *you*? Oh, you angel!

Blake (entering L. Back). Now I've lost that dod-gas-t-t-t-t—(sees Vera, swallows and sputters) hammer!

Vera. Never mind the hammer. It will keep, I'm sure. We're just going down to the pond. (Smiles sweetly.) Won't you run upstairs and get my sunshade for me? It's right by my door.

Blake. Wh-what!

Alice (terrified). Oh, oh, I'll get it. Father's too—too—

Vera. Not old, surely. He seems quite a young man to me.

Alice. Oh, no, he's sick. You said—

Blake. I'm old and sick, am I? Where's your old dod—dod-doddering parashade?

Vera. Right by the door. Thank you so much, Mr. Blake. (Exit Blake.)

Alice (sitting down weakly). I—I thought you said he was sick!

Vera. Certainly, but exercise is part of the cure. Don't forget your promise.

Roy (re-entering). Aren't you people ever coming?

Vera. As soon as Mr. Blake comes down with my parasol.

Roy. You didn't send him upstairs for your par—

Vera. I certainly did. (Long whistle from Roy.)

Blake (entering with parasol). This it?

Vera. Yes, indeed; thank you so much. Come with us now, *do!* Dr. Throckmorton will take your daughter, and you come with me.

Blake. Wh-what! This time o' day with the men a settin' round on my pocketbook? I never done sech a thing in my life.

Vera. Of course not, but it's time to begin. The best farmers are not at all old-fashioned, and I'm sure you're one of the best I ever saw.

(Links her arm in his and draws him down R.)
Let's go. A row will do you good, and, besides, I want to talk to you about intensive farming. Really, I'm not so stupid as I look. I'm a niece of Carter Kibbard, you know.

Blake. Carter Kibbard, the plow manufacturer? You don't say! He turns out a purty fair plow, purty fair. Comes dretful high, though.

Vera (stopping). Ah, that reminds me. You wanted ten dollars for a new hat, didn't you, Alice dear? Better give it to her now, Mr. Blake, before you lose your pocketbook at the pond.

Alice (terrified). Oh, no, no—I—why—I—I didn't say I wanted it.

Vera. But you do. Girls are so stupid about asking for money, aren't they, Mr. Blake? (Holds out hand for money.) I do love a generous man.

Blake (taking out his pocketbook gingerly). Don't think I got nothin' but a leetle change.

Alice. Oh, don't you remember you put a twenty-dollar bill in just a few minutes ago. Out by the oak—don't you remember?

Blake (reluctantly parting with the money). Wal, you see you git a fall an' next summer's hat with it, Alice. Looks like you had ought to git a discount a buyin' two that away.

Mrs. Throckmorton (entering). Oh, Alice, come here a moment. (Draws Alice down L.)

I have something to tell you. One of the rockers on my chair in the arbor has—

Blake. Broke, I'll bet. That'll cost—(old lady looks terrified).

Vera (quickly to Blake). You about half an hour's work to fix it. Let's go do that first before we go to the pond. (To Alice.) You and Dr. Throckmorton go on. We'll catch you. (Roy motions Alice to follow him. They exeunt R. C. Mrs. Throckmorton L. Back.)

Blake. Why, dod-g-g-g-g—(stutters).

Vera. Let's hurry, or we shall be hurting the old lady's feelings, and I know you wouldn't do that for anything. You're so big and brave and noble.

Blake (expanding under the praise, but still rather parsimonious). Wal, I'll do it this onct, but don't you ast me to do nothin' like that agin, fur I ain't a goin' ter do it.

Vera. Your bark is very fierce, Mr. Blake, but I know you've got a tender heart. Let's hurry. (Starts to exit R. C.)

Mrs. Blake (entering L. Back). Oh, Josiah, Mrs. Weatherby's just telephoned to say she can't pay that interest. (Very apologetically.) She's been sick and there's been trouble in the family.

Blake. Why—who—what business has she got telephonin' me she can't p-p-p—

Vera. She certainly doesn't know you, does she? Otherwise she would feel sure you'd be glad to extend a little more time to her.

Blake (looking at Vera in surprise). Why, that wasn't what I was a goin' to say. I was a goin' to say—

Vera. Something nicer, I know, but we mustn't linger if we're going to fix that chair. Suppose Mrs. Blake telephones Mrs. Weatherby not to worry. That'll save you some time and ease her mind.

Mrs. Blake (eagerly). Can I really tell her that, Josiah? It'd sure tickle the poor old soul half to death.

Vera. Don't you know Mr. Blake is the most generous man in the country? Of course he wants you to telephone her that at once. (To Blake.) Don't you?

Blake. Why—I—I—wal, dod-g-g-g-g—gum it, hev you own way ef you're so sot on it.

Mrs. Blake. I'm so glad you're going to be kind to her. You won't regret it, I know. (Exit, smiling.)

Blake. Who're you to be all the time a med-dlin' in my business, I'd like to know? I ain't stood so much interference from nobody in all my life, I kin tell you that right now.

Vera. You are mistaken, Mr. Blake; I haven't been interfering. It's just that I've known your generous impulses and I've tried to steal a little glory by stating them before you got the chance. I'm sort of a phonograph record, you see; but I beg your pardon for having offended you, and I assure you that you shall do the next generous thing all yourself without my butting in.

Toby (entering R. C.). Fred made me come!

Blake. He did! Wal, what's the rascal want now?

Toby. He says he's got to knock off this atternoon to take his mother to the doctor.

Blake. Why can't she go herself?

Toby. He says she's so narvous he's afraid to let her walk that fur by herself.

Blake. Wal, you tell him—(sees Vera regarding him intently)—tell him he's—he's—(gulps) been workin' purty faithful an (gulps) he kin take the atternoon off an' drive the bay mare ef he wants to.

Toby (in open-mouthed astonishment). Tell him what?

Blake (testily). To go long an' drive the bay mare. The exercise'll do her good.

Toby (backing toward R. C. as if he sees a ghost). Tell him to take the bay mare and drive his mother.

Blake (roaring). No! Drive the bay mare and take his mother, you mut!

Toby. Gosh! (Exit.)

Vera (extending both hands to Blake). You're a big man. I'm proud to know you, Mr. Blake.

Blake (looking away uncomfortably). Why, I don't know as I be.

Alice (in distance). Aren't you people ever coming?

Vera. We oughtn't to keep them waiting any longer. Come on, do, let's fix that chair. (Makes exit R. C.)

(Blake stands a moment looking after Vera. Then he scratches his head and follows her.)

Blake. Durn it all, I'll git even with her yit!

Quick Curtain.

ACT III.

SCENE.—*Feed room in Josiah Blake's barn. Bins line the wall at the rear. The corner L. Back contains bags of grain, R. Back is filled with shovels, hoes, and other implements. There is a door R. C., and near it two hooks covered with harness. Another door is found, L. C., and near it is a heap of old gunny sacks, a barrel and other rubbish. The center of the stage is occupied by a pile of hay and a small box.*

(Enter R. C. Vera, followed by Roy. She carries a basket; he, two eggs in each hand.)

Roy (gingerly handling the eggs). If you don't stop and take this egg fruit, I don't know what I won't do to you.

Vera (stopping and extending basket). Well, put them in if you insist, but you know the adage about carrying all your eggs in one basket. (*Roy* complies.) Do you suppose there are any eggs here? (*Hunts about.*) We've got to find four more if Mrs. Blake makes me that farewell cake she's promised me, and she'd like some extra ones for dinner, I suspect.

Roy (pawing over the hay and kicking gunny sacks). Don't see any.

Vera (seating herself on edge of hay). Mrs. Blake wants to beat up the eggs herself, so please get them whole, Mr. Man.

Roy. Oh, I say, I don't want to hunt for eggs anyhow; I want to talk to you. (Comes and sits on box near Vera.) It makes me "plumb gluminary," as Toby says, to think of your going away to-morrow.

Vera (smelling a wisp of hay). Um, but this is fragrant! I love it here, and I hate to go myself, but I was invited for only six weeks, and I can't overstay, you know.

Roy. Do you know whether or not you're paying your board yet?

Vera. No, I don't. I suppose I'll find out to-morrow, but I hardly know how to go about it.

Roy. Well, you certainly made over the old man. The things you've got him to do and say and the money you've inspired him to cough up have kept us all hah-hahing. You sure have mesmerized him.

Vera (earnestly). That's just what I'm afraid of. He's certainly a different man when I'm around, but will he keep it up when my influence is removed?

Roy. You're dealing in questions too large for me.

Vera. My theory is that if he had a big fright now to clench matters, his reform would be complete.

Roy. Fright? How?

Vera. We've got to lose Alice.

Roy. She knows the country too well; that won't work.

Vera. If she were a different sort of a girl, we could take her into our confidence, but she would refuse to be a party to anything which would cause any one trouble. Therefore we must abduct her.

Roy. Proceed, oh, wizardess, with your plans. Shall we have an automobile or an airship?

Vera. It will be much more commonplace than that. I want you to give me some harmless pellet that will put her to sleep for a few hours and then I'll arrange the rest.

Roy. But what if she won't take it? (Draws out medicine case reflectively.)

Vera (rising). I think she will. I heard her say she had a headache this morning, and she'll be glad of relief so as to help with the dinner her mother has promised to cook for an automobile party due about one.

Alice (entering L. C.). I've been looking all through the barn for you people. Did you find any eggs?

Vera. Not enough, I'm afraid. You come like the angels, upon mention. We've just been talking about you. How's your head?

Alice. It isn't any better, thank you. I'm afraid I ate too much candy yesterday.

Roy (shaking out a pellet on an envelope). I think I can give you something to help you, if you'll allow me.

Alice. Oh, will you? I'll be so grateful.
(Takes pellet.)

Roy. Wait a minute. I'll run to the house and get you some water. It's rather nasty, I'm afraid. (Makes hurried exit R. C.)

Alice (swallowing pill). I learned to swallow things without water when I was a child. (Sits down on box, her head in her hands.) It certainly does ache.

Vera (putting her hands on Alice's shoulders). Poor dear! Can't you lie down?

Alice. Oh, goodness no! There's such a lot to do to-day! I think mother has pressed everybody on the place into service hunting eggs or something, and of course she needs me particularly. I'm sorry, too, for I thought we'd steal away this afternoon and go for a little drive. That's out of the question, though, now.

Vera (rubbing Alice's head). You oughtn't to try to work when you feel this way. Please let me put you to bed.

Alice (rising sleepily). No—I—just—can't.

Vera. Stretch out on this nice sweet-smelly hay for a minute and let me massage the back of your neck. You know I used to help your headaches at college sometimes by doing that.

Alice (settling down on hay dreamily). For—just—a—minute—then.

Vera (rubbing Alice's head). Relax! There, that's it! You'll feel better presently.

Alice. I'd feel—better—now——if——I wasn't—so——sleep——y.

(There is a silence, during which Vera continues her task of massaging.)

Roy (entering R. C. with a glass of water). I'm sorry I was gone so long, but Mrs. Bundy met me, looking for her husband, and I couldn't seem to get away from her. (Sees Alice.) What! Gone already!

Vera. Poor thing! She was awfully done up and tired. I'll take that water, if you don't know what to do with it. (Sips a little.) Now you must help me cover Alice with hay. (Sets glass in basket.)

Roy (sifting hay over Alice). Oh, you robin!

Vera (assisting). For goodness sakes give her a chance to breathe! There! I don't believe one would notice her unless one knew she was there. (Stands off and surveys work.) Now we must go and be ready to spread the alarm as soon as they miss her. (Picks up basket, goes to door R. C., Roy following.)

Roy. I imagine that Miss Blake went to sleep from pure drowsiness. When that pellet works it ought to keep her in dreamland for several hours.

(Exeunt both.)

Bundy (entering L. C. with a huge magnifying glass. He walks about, studying the crevices in the walls). Yes, yes, here are some. I thought so.

Toby (sticking his head in L. C.). Mother wants to know if you found any eggs?

Bundy (absently). Yes—yes—a great many.

Toby (entering). Wal, give 'em here an' I'll take 'em up to the house. She wants 'em as soon as she kin git 'em.

Bundy (taking a slide from his pocket; also a pencil wrapped with cotton which he runs up and down one of the crevices, and then touches it to the slide). They are unusually fine ones; unusually fine. Give them to your mother with my compliments, and tell her that I can get her some more if she desires. (Hands slide to the amazed *Toby*.)

Toby. Huh! I said eggs—hen's eggs—e-g-g-s. Do you think we want to scramble any of your old spider stuff into our cakes?

Bundy (severely). My dear young man, you go to a grocery store for poultry eggs. A barn is the *habitat* of various *Diptera* and *Lepidoptera*; also *Arachnida*.

Toby. Well, all I got to say is, you sure are buggy.

Mrs. Bundy (off stage). Bundy, Bundy, dear!

Bundy. Ho-ho! (*Toby* takes a shovel and makes exit L. C.)

Mrs. Bundy (entering R. C.). Tee hee, what would you do if you didn't have a darling wife to look after you, Bundy?

Bundy. I'd find more specimens, I'm sure.

Mrs. Bundy (patting his head while Bundy stands and blinks at her). You dear old innocent, that's not the right answer; besides, it isn't true. You wouldn't find more bugs, because you'd be dead of starvation. You'd never eat

your meals if it wasn't for me. Come now, dear. Dinner's on the table.

Bundy (stubbornly). I must request that you go this once without me. I am pursuing an investigation that I can't interrupt at the present moment. (Takes a microscope from his pocket and sets it on the floor a little up stage and L. of hay pile.) Bring me out a glass of milk later in the afternoon, but don't come for several hours, please. (Lies down on the floor, adjusts in the microscope a slide which he has touched with the cotton-wrapped pencil, and applies his eye to the glass.)

Mrs. Bundy. Tee-hee. If you only knew how funny you looked, Bundy, you'd get up from there and come to dinner. (Moves toward door R. C. and stands gazing at him curiously.) You love me, don't you, Bundy?

Bundy (absently). Yes, yes, my dear. (Pause. Finally he raises his head slowly.) Er—er—what is it I do, my dear?

Mrs. Bundy (at door). Tee-hee, you funny old fuddle-head! Don't use a tarantula for a handkerchief or a rattler for a pipe while I'm gone. (Exit R. C.)

Bundy (ruminating). Women are very peculiar! (Applies eye to microscope.) H-m, that lens is dirty! Shockingly so! (Carefully removes slide and begins to clean the lens with his handkerchief.)

Alice (sighing and throwing out one arm). Um!

Bundy. What peculiar noises cows make! The cow is a very odd mammal, very! (Adjusting microscope again.) There, that's better! (Alice stirs. Bundy stares at pile of hay.) Now what insect can be moving in that hay? (Rises and approaches the hay at the back.) I must watch for it when it comes out.

Vera (entering R. C. with Roy). I've brought a book, and I think I'd better stay and watch the hay for fear somebody should try to pitchfork Alice.

Roy. And I'll stay with you.

Vera. No, you mustn't. (Sees Bundy.) Oh, heavens, there's Bundy! Get him away, quick! (Vera hastens down stage and furtively recovers Alice while Roy engages Bundy.)

Roy. We missed you at dinner, Mr. Bundy.

Bundy (his eyes on the hay). Yes?

Roy. Sure. Been in this hole all the time?

Bundy (returning to his microscope). Yes. Er—what was it you asked?

Roy. I say, have you seen anything?

Bundy. Yes, yes. The haystack for one thing. It moves in a peculiar way. I'm waiting to see the insect that comes out of it.

(Vera promptly sits down in front of Alice and opens her book.)

Mrs. Bundy (entering with a basket). Tee-hee, is this the only cozy corner you people could find? It doesn't look very romantic to me. (To Bundy.) Bundy, dear, it's nearly five o'clock, and you haven't had anything to eat.

Bundy (much absorbed). I haven't time to eat.

Mrs. Bundy (determinedly). Tee-hee, you're so funny when you try to be stern, Bundy. (Stands behind him and takes a piece of pie from her basket.) Here, I'll feed you. Take a bite of this. (Bundy takes a bite without looking up, and she continues to feed him pickles and pie during her lines.) Have you seen Miss Blake, Dr. Throckmorton?

Roy. No, I don't see her—I—er—mean I haven't seen her.

Vera. Why—do you want her?

Mrs. Bundy. Tee-hee, no, but her mother does. She's been missing from the house most of the day, and they're beginning to get worried about her.

Roy. What's a day! That isn't much!

Vera. Haven't they any idea where she is?

Mrs. Bundy. Tee-hee, they haven't the slightest. It seems she isn't in the habit of going off, so they are especially anxious.

Blake (entering R. C.). Any you folks seen Alice?

Bundy. Why, I guess I saw her going toward the pond. Now let me see—was it she? Yes, I saw her going down there either to-day or yesterday. I think it was to-day.

Blake. After them lilies again. Like as not she's fell in. I'd be 'bleeged to ye, Dr. Throckmorton, ef ye'd go down an' help the boys look.

I'm a goin' ter hitch up an' rouse the neighbors.
(Takes harness off the hooks.)

Roy. I'll be glad to do what I can. Come on, Mr. Bundy. (Excitedly.) Every minute may count. (Makes exit, running. Bundy follows more leisurely.)

Mrs. Blake (entering, terrified). Josiah, Fred says he saw her goin' up the mill road.

Blake (fumbling with the harness). He did! Thar ain't no tellin' what'll happen to her up that away. A catamount'll eat her or the gypsies 'll kerry her off, or somethin'.

Mrs. Blake (wringing her hands). Father! Father! Do somethin'! Don't stand there like a stone. Hurry! Oh, hurry!

Blake (petulantly). Dod-g-gast this harness. It's all tangled. (Helplessly.) I can't untangle the blamed thing. Dang it all, I'll give five—three hundred dollars to the one that finds her. (Calls.) Fred! Fred! (Man in overalls enters hastily.) Get on a horse an' go ast the neighbors fur help. If ye git back this side of half hour, I'll double your wages. (Man runs out.) Dod-gz-gast it all! Where can that gal be?

Mrs. Bundy. I'm sure she'll turn up all right, Mr. Blake.

Blake. No, she won't. I have a feelin' she won't. I ain't never been very good to her, an' I'm a bein' punished, that's all.

Mrs. Throckmorton (entering). Oh, Mrs. Blake, I have something important to tell you. (Draws Mrs. Blake down stage.)

Mrs. Blake. What? Oh, what?

Mrs. Throckmorton. I just thought you ought to know I spilled some Red Seal ink on that table cover in my room.

Blake. Ain't ye heard my Alice's lost?

Mrs. Throckmorton. Haven't you found her yet?

Mrs. Blake (agonized). No, oh, no! If you could only help us, Mrs. Throckmorton.

Mrs. Throckmorton. I can't bear to think of that pretty young girl being lost—so sweet and pretty she was, and so agreeable, too.

Toby (rushing in with lighted lantern). They think they've found her down by the river. Come quick!

Mr. Blake. Oh, God, spare me this, and I'll lead a different life from now on. (Turns and runs after Toby, and is followed by all save Vera—the women more or less hysterical.)

Vera. Whew, it's getting dark! Wonder if they didn't see me? (Begins pulling hay off Alice.) I hate to wake her up, but I must. Alice, dear, Alice! Wake up!

Alice (drowsily). I set the table last night.

Vera. Wake up, I say! They think you're lost and everybody's nearly crazy.

Alice (pettishly). Why should they be? I've only been asleep a little while.

Vera. You've been asleep a long while, and I suppose they're doubly worried because you never leave the place without telling them. I must let them know. (Runs to door R. C. and

shouts.) Safe! Found! Safe! I've found her! (Listens a moment and then makes a megaphone of her hands.) At the barn! (Comes back to Alice, who is sitting upon the hay.) How's your head, dear?

Alice. Better, and I'm so hungry.

Vera. That's a good sign. I'll get you something to eat in a minute.

(The searchers burst into the room, greatly excited. The farmhands and other men carry lanterns.)

Blake. Where's my gal? Where is she? (Sees Alice.) It's true, bless God, it's true. Come kiss your old father, daughter. (Mrs. Blake sinks on box and dabs at her eyes with her handkerchief.)

Roy (to Vera). Here's a telegram for you. I hope it isn't bad news. (The excitement cools down immediately, and eyes are focused on Vera.) The station agent has just sent it up.

Vera (reading the telegram). It's only to say that my sleeper reservations are made for tomorrow.

Blake (stepping forward with one arm around Alice). You ain't a goin' to-morry, an' that's all there is to it. You got to stay an' help us celebrate. You've been a boarder up to now, but fur the rest o' the summer you kin stay on fur nothin'.

Alice (in distress). No, father, no. She's not a boarder. She's been my guest till now. I—I

—(she is plainly dazed by all that is going on around her.)

Blake (hastily). That don't affect it none. If she's been your guest fur six weeks, she'll be mine fur the next six. Don't know when I've taken sech a likin' to nobody.

Vera. You are ever so good to me, but—but—

Blake. They ain't a goin' to be no buts. You're a goin' ter stay now an' you're a comin' back to be our guest every single summer attar this.

Vera (somewhat affected). Dear Mr. Blake, you're so much better to me than I deserve that I'm going to tell you why I'd like to accept your invitation to stay a little longer and why I can't come back next summer. (Extends hand to Roy.) We've found, Dr. Throckmorton and I, that—that—

Blake. That don't affect my offer at all. We'll keep the two places set at the table fur ye both.

Mrs. Bundy. Tee-hee-tee-hee, I told you so, Bundy.

Bundy. Er—er—what was it you told me, my dear?

Mrs. Bundy. Tee-hee, I said Vera was making use of her vacation.

CURTAIN.

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